

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

FIELD BOOK OF EASTERN BIRDS. By Leon Augustus Hausman. Illustrated by Jacob Bates Abbott. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1946: 4 × 6¾ in., xvi + 659 pp., 6 col. pls., more than 400 figs. \$3.75.

With this book G. P. Putnam's add a bird identification volume for eastern United States to their well-known pocket-sized Field Book series. It treats "all birds east of the Mississippi and the majority of the birds east of the Rockies."

The text for most species is arranged under the seven subheads: Other names, Field marks, Field description, Characteristic habits, Notes, Habitat, and Range. The author follows the nomenclature of the A.O.U. Check-List (1931) but ignores its two supplements (1944 and 1945).

Nearly every species is figured in black and white, and 94 are also shown in color. Many of the drawings have already appeared in the author's "Illustrated Encyclopedia of American Birds" (1944). The color plates are good and well printed. The species to be represented were wisely selected, and these plates alone will solve quickly many identification problems. A strange exception occurs on Plate 5, where the very similar Bicknell's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes are figured and appear to be quite differently colored. Many of the pen-and-ink drawings are good, or even excellent, but a considerable number are not recognizable. Even among such distinctively marked birds as the male wood warblers, we find nine drawings that no one could possibly identify except by the legend.

In order, presumably, to assist the reader, the account of each family and of almost every species, however short, is allotted a full page, and this results in many nearly blank pages—a curious procedure in a pocket guide, where space is at a premium. The additional subspecies under each species are given separate headings following the species account (and in some cases are even figured), but the text for these is usually condensed to a mere statement of the distinctive physical characteristics (usually not observable in the field). Unfortunately, in some cases the account of one of the subspecies has been separated from the others and appears among the races of a different species.

Forty-seven pages are devoted to an illustrated key to the families of birds found in eastern North America. The families as complete units are forced into one or another of 14 "sections," the specifications for which are a curious mixture of the ecological and the anatomical. The result, in many cases, will be more confusing than helpful.

The reader will find this volume least useful when applied to certain difficult groups such as the shorebirds, gulls, and flycatchers. Here the author has not taken advantage of the comparative characters described in recent years by our leading field workers, nor has the artist figured these species in a way to show such points. For example, little is said of the wing patterns of gulls, and still less is shown in the illustrations.

This volume will help many people to identify birds, but it falls short of the standard set by the best present-day field guides.—J. Van Tyne.

A NATURALIST'S SCRAPBOOK. By Thomas Barbour. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1946: 5½ × 8 in., x + 218 pp., 20 photos. \$3.00.

This posthumous collection of essays will be of great interest to all ornithologists. The author knew well the rich ornithological history of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard that he did so much to make one of the great centers of ornithological research, and he here relates many things not touched on in his earlier volumes. These new facts have not only great human interest but also real scientific value in that they help us to trace important bird specimens and generally to explain the movements of earlier ornithologists and their collections.